

ACGRD Minutes

When: Monday, December 4, 2023

Time: 2:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/2432175157?pwd=NGltaDZQcGp4MHlxdzJldVFyalpZZz09>

Meeting ID: 243 217 5157

Passcode: 5FwRsN

1) Roll Call: Scott Griffith, Chris Fidler, Joe Dornbrock, Danica Gonzalves, Steve Stevens, Lisa Elijah, Vicky Garrison, Amanda Vazquez, Wayne Landon, Morgan Brown, Heather Ansley, Tim Wolfe, Anthonya James, Julie Howell, Sean Ferry, Kristen Gordon, Emma Goldstein, Martha Varela, Joseph Dunn

2) Approval of October & November 2023 Minutes: Joe motioned to approve both month's minutes. Wayne seconded. Motion passed.

3) National Update:

- **Heather Ansley:**
 - **Welcome to our newest Advocacy Attorney, Anthonya James! She will be working on voting, social security, housing, and ADA legal issues.**
 - **We are currently advertising for disability policy advisor, so if you know anyone interested, send them our way. (it's a refashioned title for Lee Page's old position.)**
 - **Current VA federal budget goes through Jan 19 when the CR ends. Other agencies are in a February timeframe. Congress is supposed to be actively working on a solution to its budget. We are working on a proposal for 25-26 Independent Budget**
 - **FAA Reauthorization extended through December. Senate may markup their version this week, but it doesn't look like it will happen. Apparently they've made some progress on some of the sticking points they've been dealing with since June. We continue to work on this and are prepared to jump into action, comparing both the House and Senate bills.**
 - **Second session of this Congress will begin in January. We don't want to have to start over in a new Congress as we've been able to get a number of key provisions included.**
 - **June 2024 Seminar, but President's testimony will still be in March. We will be asking folks to do virtual outreach to members to discuss priorities. We will have a webinar in February that will prep the issues we want people to discuss. Voter Voice, Social media posts, etc. that line up with the testimony.**

- **Morgan Brown:**
 - **HISA Grant Bill introduction: Sen. Cortes Masto & Bozman agreed to cosponsor the legislation. S 3290 Autonomy for Disabled Veterans Act. It restructures the HISA grant program to allow a single \$9,000 rate for all**

veterans (sc and non sc) The exception to Bacon's bill is it does not have the limitations on use. Bacon's bill limits a veteran to 3 uses. Uses the Turner Building Index (like SAH and other housing modification programs) Would be a hefty increase for FUTURE users. Not retroactive.

- House will be voting on 3 veterans related bills this week HR 3848 enables VSOs to better assist homeless veterans. Our attention will be on HR 3581 the COPE Act which authorizes VA to award grants that would provide mental health counseling and treatment to caregivers of veterans participating in PCAFC.
 - HR 542 Home Care Act will come to House Floor for a vote – the version marked up out of subcommittee (not the omnibus package). It's a good signal that the chamber is planning to take action on the bill. One of the triggers was a letter that PVA and the Dole Foundation drafted and had 23 other agencies sign on urging congress to move the bill forward, expressing the importance of lifting the 65% limitation that VA can pay for home and community-based services. It's unlikely that the Senate would pass this as a stand alone measure. The upper chamber is more likely to wait for the corrected language and roll it into the omnibus package. The staff of both committees have been working behind the scenes crafting a larger veterans package of provisions. Moving slowly but steadily and anticipate an agreement to be reached by the holidays. The passage of the House version would be a very good sign for us and a signal we're getting closer to the end. We have cautioned both the house and senate that we will ramp up pressure in mid -January if that anticipated timeline would break down. *Now is a VERY good time for members and chapters to send a message to their officials in Congress urging this bill's passage. Timely messages could make the difference in getting this passed early next year. In case it comes up, there is a small group of misinformed organizations that mistakenly thought the bill to be voted on this week doesn't include the 65% cap elimination. This is inaccurate. The bill addresses our biggest concerns.
 - HR 3790 Justice for ALS Veterans Act – CBO scored \$32 million over 9 years. Low cost for this legislation should help us get it across the finish line. DAMA subcommittee amended it slightly in the markup session. Tomorrow full VA Committee is scheduled to markup the bill itself and would make the measure floor ready for the chamber to vote on. It's a great time to revisit the letters on PVAction Force.
 - On Wednesday, Morgan will be out for some time for another spine surgery and hopes to be back for the February ACGRD meeting. Direct correspondence to Heather or Julie during this time.
- **Julie Howell:**
 - S 2516 Veterans Accessibility Act – starting to have conversations and make some progress on a House companion for that. We will meet on Wednesday and hopefully hash out a House companion. Lisa will let everyone know through VoterVoice once that happens. It would set up a federal advisory committee within VA on accessibility.
 - VA SAH, Adaptive Housing programs, Habitat for Humanity, and PVA's Architecture department will all be on the Dec 14th Webinar on Adaptive Housing.
 - **Lisa Elijah:**

- **VoterVoice Advocacy Numbers: looking at distinction between advocates and members. Will send the current numbers out soon. Will send out SVAC and HVAC committee members.**
 - **What are your thoughts – if we create a state captain for each state to lead efforts in that area leading to a stronger voice on those issues. WY, Alaska, and Montana are specific states that we could use state captains in.**
 - **Concerns?**
 - **Kristen – working toward getting some interested folks in New England. It's always great to have more people working together on the same goals.**
- **Danica Gonzalves**
 - **Federal Transit Administration has put out an online forum for public to submit ideas for things the agency should work on for safety, accessibility, etc. It's an opportunity for PVA members to share their ideas if they want. You have to create a login to participate. It's open until January 5th. Something the agency can look at to improve transportation. Share with chapters as the more people who share similar ideas, the further up those ideas move.**
 - **<https://exploringfuturetransit.ideascale.com/c/landing>**

What is your chapter doing on the Advocacy/Legislative front on the state or national level?

Kristen – briefing last week with Sen. Marke's staff, district staff – thanked them for the caregiver bill he just introduced and his support for the air carrier access bill. Hoping he will sign on to the ALS and Elizabeth Dole Act.

4) Reports of Officers:

- **Chair – Scott Griffith:** no report
- **Vice Chair – Wayne Landon:** no report
- **Treasurer – Joe Dornbrock:** Dues update 16 chapters have paid. Bay area, california and cal diego, cf, gp, iowa, keystone, lone, mid America, minn, Nevada, north central, tri state, Texas, Wisconsin, Balance as of Nov 30: \$16,864.99
- **Secretary – Amanda Vazquez:** no report

5) Old Business: none

6) New Business: none

7) Good of the Order: none

8) Next Meeting Date: January 8, 2024

9) Adjournment: 2:35pm